

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 7698

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM PINS KS

SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

REF: STATE 213799

1. THE ROKG'S RATHER NIGGARDLY ACTIONS ON AUGUST 15 WERE ABOUT WHAT I EXPECTED, BUT IF EVENTS OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS CONTINUE TO RELAX THE STRAIN IN OUR RELATIONS WITH KOREA, I THINK WE MAY BE ABLE TO PRESS FOR A BETTER FUTURE PERFORMANCE. IN ANY EVENT, I AGREE WITH THE REFTEL MESSAGE THAT WE MUST CONTINUE IN A WELL THOUGHT OUT MANNER TO FOSTER FURTHER POLITICAL EVOLUTION AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENT IN KOREA. DURING MY INITIAL CALLS, I HAVE MADE A SPECIAL POINT OF RAISING THIS SUBJECT WITH THE PRESIDENT, FOREIGN MINISTER, HOME MINISTER (POLICE), DIRECTOR OF KCIA, RANKING MEMBERS OF THE BLUE HOUSE STAFF, AND SOME PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS WHO MIGHT INFLUENCE THE PRESIDENT. WHILE NOT GOING INTO SPECIFICS IN THESE INITIAL DISCUSSIONS, I HAVE HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANT ROLE PLAYED BY HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS IN THE U.S. POLICY PROCESS AND THE NEED FOR A CONTINUING SENSE OF IMPROVEMENT IN KOREA.

2. DESPITE SOME STRONG CAVEATS DISCUSSED BELOW, IT APPEARS TO ME THAT CONDITIONS MAY PROVIDE A CLIMATE ALLOW-
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ING FURTHER MOVEMENT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS FRONT. UNTIL RECENTLY THE KOREANS HAVE BEEN FACED WITH A SERIES OF ISSUES WHICH THEY SAW AS MORE DEMANDING OF URGENT SOLUTION THAN THE MORE GENERAL QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. PRESENTLY THESE OTHER PROBLEMS -- E.G., CONCERN OVER THE STRENGTH OF THE U.S. SECURITY COMMITMENT, THE COMPENSATION PACKAGE FOR OUR GROUND FORCES WITHDRAWALS, PARK TONG-SUN

AND KIM DONG JO -- ARE EITHER SOLVED OR ON THE ROAD TO SOLUTION. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENT MAY THUS STAND OUT MORE SHARPLY -- EVEN TO SOME GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS -- AS AN AREA IN NEED OF ACTION.

3. DOMESTICALLY THE SOLUTION OF THE ROK'S INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS, IN PARTICULAR THOSE RELATED TO SECURITY, ERODES THE GOVERNMENT'S RATIONALE THAT TIGHT CONTROLS ARE REQUIRED IN THE FACE OF AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE. INTERNAL POLITICS ARE ALSO MOVING IN A DIRECTION RELATIVELY FAVORABLE TO OUR EFFORTS. PRESIDENT PARK HAS BEEN RE-ELECTED TO HIS SECOND TERM UNDER THE "YUSHIN CONSTITUTION", WITH LESS TURMOIL THAN ANTICIPATED. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS AND PRESIDENT PARK'S INAUGURATION, BOTH NOW SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER, PROVIDE A POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY FOR POSITIVE MOVES ON HUMAN RIGHTS. WHEN THESE TWO EVENTS HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED, THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE ACHIEVED AN INSTITUTIONAL SITUATION WHICH MAY MAKE IT FEEL MORE SECURE IN TAKING THE RISK OF RELAXED CONTROLS.

4. IN CONSIDERING HOW WE MIGHT CAPITALIZE ON THIS, I THINK IT ESSENTIAL THAT WE KEEP IN MIND A NUMBER OF FACTORS SEVERELY LIMITING WHAT WE CAN ACCOMPLISH. FIRST, WE ARE DEALING WITH A GOVERNMENT WHICH IN THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES DEFINES THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN RIGHTS VERY DIFFERENTLY FROM US, PRIDES ITSELF FOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS
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WHICH WE TEND TO IGNORE, AND HAS CONSIDERABLE POPULAR SUPPORT IN RATIONALIZING ITS CAUTION ON THE GROUNDS OF THE NORTH KOREAN THREAT. SECOND, FOR ALL THE IMPROVEMENT WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS, NEITHER THE ROKG NOR THE KOREAN PEOPLE HAVE FULLY RECOVERED FROM SHOCKS TO THE US/ROK RELATIONSHIP. THE ROKG STILL FEELS WE HAVE PLACED A BARELY TOLERABLE STRAIN UPON ITS SOVEREIGNTY, AND IT REMAINS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TOWARD US ACTIONS WHICH SMACK OF PRESSURE. THIS SENSITIVITY IS MIRRORED IN THE CONCERNS OF MANY OTHER KOREANS. SINCE UNCERTAINTY ON THE PART OF KOREANS HAS, IN THE PAST, TRANSLATED INTO A WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT A GREATER DEGREE OF CENTRAL CONTROL, WE SHOULD TAKE CARE TO AVOID OVERLY NEGATIVE PUBLIC SIGNALS. AND FINALLY, THERE IS ALWAYS THE RISK THAT STUDENT ACTIVISM AND DOMESTIC POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS THIS FALL WILL TAKE ON A MOMENTUM WHICH ALARMS THE AUTHORITIES AND LEADS TO A CLAMP DOWN RATHER THAN LIBERALIZATION. THIS IS NOT THE GENERAL EXPECTATION BUT IS A POSSIBILITY THAT BOTHERS MANY PEOPLE HERE.

5. IN LIGHT OF THIS ASSESSMENT, I RECOMMEND WE PROCEED AS FOLLOWS:

A. WE SHOULD NOT DEAL WITH PRESIDENT PARK IN A MANNER WHICH PAINTS HIM INTO A CORNER, BUT RATHER ALLOW HIM THE APPEARANCE OF TAKING HIS OWN ACTIONS, FOR HIS OWN REASONS, AND AT A TIME OF HIS OWN CHOOSING.

B. WE SHOULD NEVERTHELESS TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY HIGH LEVEL MEETINGS, E.G., THE SECRETARY AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER AT THE UNGA, DURING DEFENSE SECRETARY BROWN'S PROPOSED TRIP TO KOREA IN LATE OCTOBER/EARLY NOVEMBER, AND AT MY NEXT MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT, TO MAKE OUR CASE ON HUMAN RIGHTS. INDEED, TO ALLOW SUCH MEETINGS TO TAKE PLACE WITHOUT MAKING THESE POINTS WOULD IMPLY DIMINISHED INTEREST.
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SEOUL 7698

C. IN RAISING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE WE SHOULD FRANKLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE DIFFERENCES OF DEFINITION WHICH EXIST BETWEEN US, AND WE SHOULD NOTE PROGRESS WHICH HAS BEEN MADE AND PRAISE RECENT ACTIONS, IF APPROPRIATE. FOLLOWING SUCH AN INTRODUCTION, WE WOULD THEN BE WELL PREPARED TO MOVE ON TO OUR VIEW OF THE NEED FOR FURTHER PROGRESS AND, POSSIBLY, SPECIFIC ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE SUCH PROGRESS.

D. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD STRUCTURE OUR FORMAL APPROACHES TO PRESIDENT PARK TO PROVIDE THE BROAD FRAME-

WORK OF WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE. HE WILL NOT BE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO SPECIFIC REQUESTS, AND WE SHOULD AVOID PLACING HIM IN A SITUATION WHERE HE MUST ANSWER YES OR NO. THE DETAILS OF OUR REQUESTS CAN BE PROVIDED INFORMALLY TO THOSE JUST BELOW THE PRESIDENT. IN THIS WAY HE WILL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THE APPEARANCE OF INDEPENDENT ACTION, IN THE FULL LIGHT OF WHAT WE WOULD HOPE THAT ACTION WILL BE.

E. GENERALLY WE BELIEVE OUR EMPHASIS SHOULD BE ON HUMANE TREATMENT AND CANCELLATION OF EMERGENCY MEASURES, ALTHOUGH WE NEED NOT AVOID MENTION OF KIM TAE-JUNG.

6. NOTE: THERE IS MOVEMENT HERE TO GENERATE A FUKUDA-PARK SUMMIT. WHILE THE GOJ HAS BEEN CAUTIOUS IN PRESSING
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THE ROKG ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN GENERAL, IT DOES HAVE A SPECIFIC AND PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE STATUS OF KIM TAE-JUNG. SPECULATION IS THAT A PREREQUISITE FOR A FUKUDA-PARK MEETING WOULD BE THE RELEASE OF KIM, WITH POSSIBLY THE RESTORATION OF HIS CIVIL RIGHTS AND AN AGREEMENT THAT HE IS FREE TO LEAVE KOREA IF HE SO DESIRES. WHILE THE END RESULT WILL LIKELY BE LESS THAN FULL RESTORATION OF KIM'S PRIVILEGES, WE SHOULD CONSIDER LETTING THE JAPANESE TAKE THE LEAD ON KIM AND THE POSSIBILITY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THEM ON THIS MATTER. IT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL TO HAVE MORE THAN ONE VOICE RAISED, FOR WHATEVER REASON, ON HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS.
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